



JANE DEE HULL
GOVERNOR

RICHARD C. ZELZNAK
DIRECTOR

STATE OF ARIZONA
GOVERNMENT INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AGENCY
411 N. Central Ave., Suite 770
Phoenix AZ 85004

NEWS RELEASE

TOPAZ Connecting Schools and Rural Areas Ahead of Schedule with Broadband

(PHOENIX – SEPTEMBER 25, 2001) Governor Jane Dee Hull's commitment to connect rural communities with high-speed broadband telecommunications access was highlighted by today's announcement of the results from the State of Arizona's Invitation For Quotes (IFQ).

Last year, 60 of Arizona's communities were connected with broadband – compared to 186 communities with broadband offerings today. Broadband is defined as connectivity at 1.5 megabits per second – roughly equivalent to cable modem speeds.

Rick Zelznak, the Director of the Government Information Technology Agency and State Chief Information Officer said, "We are driving the demand for build-out to schools, government offices and communities. By pooling our resources, the demand for service will pull the last mile of connectivity into every school and eventually to businesses and homes."

Originally intended to connect the top 87 communities by population in Arizona, the Telecommunications Open Partnerships for Arizona (TOPAZ) program will be offering broadband services to 186 communities by the new year.

The nationally recognized, first of its kind, School Facilities Board (SFB) award of a \$27.9 million contract for the Application Service Provider (ASP) will provide powerful, on-line educational tools and resources for teachers and students and offer content, courseware and reference materials including over 250 software titles online. Applications such as this drive the demand for broadband services.

Zelznak is coordinating the Governor's effort to bring broadband statewide and said, "Technology thrives on 'demand drivers' such as distance learning or telemedicine. Dr. Geiger and the School Facilities Board are light years ahead on education technology and the creation of on-line educational content. We must have a telecommunications backbone to deliver the goods."

"Schools and communities across Arizona have a heightened need for Internet access. Some communities have access to broadband telecommunications, but we are working to make it the rule, not the exception." Zelznak added.

These new high-speed broadband services will ultimately lead to increased educational opportunities and will enhance economic development for the rural parts of the State.

Recently, the SFB and GITA asked the contractors under State contract to respond to an Invitation For Quotation (IFQ) to specifically address telecommunication connectivity in rural Arizona.

“Connecting” all of Arizona, and especially rural Arizona, is a priority for Governor Hull. The Telecommunications Open Partnerships of Arizona (TOPAZ) initiative, coordinated by the Government Information Technology Agency (GITA), encourages schools, political sub-divisions, tribal governments, and other non-profit entities to purchase telecommunication services from statewide carrier services contracts. These contracts provide widespread competition, advantageous pricing and availability, high quality services, and enforceable Service Level Agreements. In addition, communities are able to leverage their combined “buying power” to encourage carriers to provide telecommunications availability to otherwise underserved areas of the State.

For more information, contact Rick Zelznak at zelznak@gita.state.az.us or (602) 340-9698, ext. 215 or Brad Tritle at btritle@gita.state.az.us or (602) 340-9698, ext. 204

XXX